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## **6102.0 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2001**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

22.1 The Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns was a longitudinal survey covering the reference period September 1994 to September 1997. Data for the survey were collected in three waves - with each wave covering a 12 month reference period.

22.2 Longitudinal surveys involve collecting data from the same respondents at intervals over an extended period of time, with the information collected on each occasion linked together to provide insights into the transitions over time.

22.3 In May 1994 the Government released a White Paper on Employment and Growth, titled 'Working Nation'. The overriding objective of Working Nation was to provide a comprehensive program to boost jobs growth, increase skill formation in the workforce, and ensure the long-term unemployed were not left behind during the economic recovery.

22.4 The central feature of the Working Nation initiatives was the 'Job Compact'. The Job Compact was targeted at the long-term unemployed, and provided individual case management and access to a range of labour market programs leading to a firm offer of a job placement for 6 to 12 months. The assessment of these initiatives was the driving force for the creation of the survey.

22.5 The objectives of the survey were to provide information on the dynamics of the labour market and to assist in the assessment of the Working Nation initiatives.

### **SURVEY OUTPUT**

22.6 A range of data was made available from the survey in the form of publications, unit record

data, special tabulations and occasional papers. Broad estimates were published in **Australians' Employment and Unemployment Patterns, 1994 to 1997** (Cat. no. 6286.0).

## TYPES OF VARIABLES

22.7 As part of the survey a wide range of labour market related data was collected. Variables were grouped into five categories - fixed, dynamic, episodal, occurrence, and summary.

- **Fixed variables** were data items not inherently subject to change, and were therefore only collected in the first wave. They included: sex, age, birthplace, year of arrival, employment history.
- **Dynamic variables** were subject to change over time, and were updated each year at the time of interview. They included: geographic location, housing, labour force status, current study, educational attainment.
- **Episodal variables** were collected in respect of a particular episode, defined as a particular activity or occurrence within a reference period or spanning more than one reference period. Three types of episodes were identified: episodes of labour market activity; episodes of labour market support from the then Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA); and episodes of income support. See below for further details.
- **Occurrence variables** comprised periods of in-house training and external training, and employment offers.
- **Summary variables** were data items that summarised one or more episodal variables.

### Episodes of labour market activity

22.8 Episodes of labour market activity encompassed every day of the reference period and comprised periods of working, looking for work, or absence from the labour market (i.e. neither working nor looking). If a respondent had two or more jobs at the same time, each was treated as a separate episode. A change of employer constituted a new episode. An episode of working would overlap with an episode of looking for work if a respondent was working and looking for work at the same time. However, neither episodes of work nor episodes of looking for work could overlap with episodes of absence from the labour market.

### Episodes of DEETYA labour market support

22.9 Episodes of DEETYA labour market support comprised periods of registration with the then Commonwealth Employment Service (CES), case management and Labour Market Program participation. Data for these episodes were provided by DEETYA and required the respondents' consent.

### Episodes of income support

22.10 Episodes of income support comprised periods during which the respondent received income support. Data for these episodes were provided by the then Department of Social Security (DSS) and required the respondents' consent.

## LEVELS OF OUTPUT

22.11 The focus of the survey was on the selected respondent, and so detailed information at the income unit, family and household level is not available. However, because a limited amount of information was collected from the respondent about their spouse and other usual residents, some broad household and family level information is available.

## SURVEY OUTPUT

22.12 Estimates from the survey include:

Socio-demographic data	Sex, age, marital status, birthplace, year of arrival in Australia, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, educational attainment, language use, disabilities, housing tenure, household/family structure, and geographic region. .
Employment	Labour force status, trade union membership, and employment history. .
Episodes of working	Start and finish date of each episode, status in employment, hours worked, permanent/casual, industry, occupation, earnings, sector, job preferences, and method of job attainment. .
Episodes of looking for work	Start and finish date of each episode, whether looking for full-time or part-time work, active steps taken to find work, difficulties in finding work, mobility, and reservation wage. .
Episodes of absence from the labour market	Start and finish date of each episode, availability to start work, and main activity. .
Employment offers	Offers of employment, whether offer was accepted, and reasons for not accepting offer. .
Training	Types of training course, time spent on course, field of course, and course outcome. .
Income	Income, and sources of annual income. .
Labour Market Support from DEETYA	Start and finish date of CES registration, reason ceased CES registration; type of Labour Market Programs, start and finish date of Labour Market Program, post-program outcomes; start and finish date of case management, case management outcome; and reading, writing and speaking proficiency. .

Income support from DSS	Start and finish date of income support, type of income support, and amount of income support.
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## THE TARGET POPULATION

22.13 The target population consisted of those people considered to be most likely to be currently eligible for labour market assistance or likely to become eligible for assistance in the near future. It was determined after consultation with government officials, labour market analysts and other users and was designed to enable the survey objectives to be met in the most efficient manner.

22.14 In broad terms, the target population comprised persons resident in private dwellings who were aged 15 to 59. Within this broad population, there were three subgroups:

- Jobseekers - comprising unemployed persons, part-time workers looking for a job with more hours, and others indicating a desire to join the labour force in the near future. The purpose of this group was to facilitate the study of differences between the outcomes of Labour Market Program participants and those of 'similar' groups not participating in the Job Compact.
- Population reference group - comprising a random sample of the population aged 15 to 59. It was included because of the need to have a reference group of the general population so that outcomes of various programs could be assessed in the context of general labour market conditions.
- Labour Market Program participants - a sample of persons who commenced a Job Compact job placement and/or commenced a training program between July 1994 and February 1995. This component of the sample was included to ensure that the initial sample included a sufficient number of Job Compact participants.

## SCOPE AND COVERAGE

### SCOPE

22.15 The scope of the survey was all persons aged 15-59 years except:

- overseas residents in Australia;
- certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from the Census and estimated resident population counts;
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants) stationed in Australia; and
- certain remote areas in the Northern Territory and Queensland which were difficult or costly to enumerate.

22.16 The survey was conducted in urban and rural areas in all States and Territories and only included persons living in private dwellings.

## **COVERAGE**

22.17 For the Jobseeker and Population reference group subgroups, coverage rules were applied to ensure each person in scope was associated with only one dwelling and hence had only one chance of selection. Coverage rules were not needed for the Labour Market Program subgroup as specific people had already been identified as members of this subgroup.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

### **PANEL ESTABLISHMENT AND DATA COLLECTION**

22.18 Screening interviews were conducted between 24 April and 7 July 1995, for simplicity referred to as 'May 1995', across approximately 69,000 households. The purpose of these interviews was to identify respondents falling into the Jobseeker subgroup, and to establish the Population reference group. The screening interviews were conducted on an ARA basis. Following the identification of a target group member, personal interviews were conducted with potential respondents. Of those identified, 95% were recruited.

22.19 The Labour Market Program subgroup was not asked screening questions, as specific people had already been identified as members of this subgroup.

### **COLLECTION WAVES**

22.20 There were three collection waves for the survey:

- wave 1 - reference period 5 September 1994 to 3 September 1995;
- wave 2 - reference period 4 September 1995 to 1 September 1996; and
- wave 3 - reference period 2 September 1996 to 31 August 1997.

22.21 Data for each collection wave were collected over a six week period following the end of the reference period. Questions relating to episodal data required the respondent to recall for what period(s) they had been working, looking for work or absent from the labour market. To obtain occurrence data, respondents needed to recall details of training courses and job offers received in the past 12 months.

22.22 Computer Assisted Interviewing was used in the second and third waves.

### **USE OF DOCUMENTARY SOURCES (ADMINISTRATIVE DATA)**

22.23 With respondents' consent, data collected directly from them during the interview were supplemented with data about CES registration, case management and Labour Market Program participation (from DEETYA) and data about income support (from DSS). This minimised the interview time for respondents and ensured that accurate information was available about their involvement with labour market assistance programs and about their receipt of income support.

## **SAMPLE DESIGN**

22.24 A probability sample design was used. The Jobseeker and Population reference group samples were drawn from the Population Survey Master Sample and excluded special dwellings and the remote and sparsely settled stratum. The Labour Market Program participants sample was drawn from a list of such participants provided by DEETYA.

## **JOBSEEKER SUBGROUP**

22.25 The design used for the Jobseeker subgroup sample was the same as that used in the Labour Force Survey (see Chapter 19 for more detail). However, three major adjustments were made to the sample selection methodology:

- CDs were selected in the survey sample with unequal probabilities according to the number of unemployed persons resident in the CD at the time of the 1991 Census enumeration. That is, CDs with a high proportion of resident unemployed persons in August 1991 were given a higher probability of selection in the survey sample than CDs with a low proportion of unemployed persons. The weighting scheme for the Jobseeker subgroup accounted for the unequal probability sampling scheme.
- More dwellings than usual were selected in the survey sample to be screened for Jobseekers - roughly twice as many dwellings as are in the Labour Force Survey.
- The sample was designed to be more geographically clustered than the Labour Force Survey. Such clustering produces a substantial saving in survey field costs for a small loss of sample efficiency.

22.26 For the Jobseeker subgroup, all persons aged 15 to 59 years in selected dwellings were 'screened' to determine whether or not they were a 'Jobseeker'. Only Jobseekers were recruited to the Jobseeker subgroup.

## **LABOUR MARKET PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

22.27 The sample methodology for this subgroup was that of a list-based probability sample. DEETYA provided the ABS with a list of eligible persons. In order to produce a more efficient sample, the list was stratified into homogenous (similar) groups (strata) and then a random sample was selected from each group. The stratification variables used were: State of usual residence, length of unemployment, and job placement/training status. In total 2,300 people were selected. This number allowed for various types of sample loss, such as persons refusing to allow DEETYA to pass their name to the ABS, incorrect addresses, and overlap with the Labour Force Survey sample.

22.28 Procedures were put in place to ensure that the probability sample chosen for this subgroup was in some sense geographically close to the Jobseeker subgroup and the Population reference group (see below), but not overlapping these subgroups, nor overlapping the Labour Force Survey or any other ABS household survey.

## **POPULATION REFERENCE GROUP**

22.29 A random subsample of the dwellings selected for screening in the Jobseeker sample was selected in the Population reference group dwelling sample. From each dwelling in the Population reference group sample, a randomly selected in-scope person was selected in the

Population reference group, if such a person existed (some dwellings selected in the Population reference group dwelling sample did not contain any persons in the population of interest).

22.30 It is worth noting that, using this sampling methodology, it was possible for a person to be selected both in the Jobseeker subgroup and the Population reference group.

## PANEL SIZE AND MAINTENANCE

22.31 The ability to maintain contact with a relatively high proportion of the panel was critical to the usefulness of the survey data. A number of strategies were put in place to help the ABS stay in contact with respondents between interviews. These included: 'change of details' cards for respondents to advise a new address, etc.; a toll-free telephone number for the respondent to call; asking the respondent for contact details of up to three people who were likely to know the respondent's whereabouts; and regular mail contact throughout the survey. However, it was inevitable that some non-response would occur when people were unwilling or unable to cooperate, or when they could not be contacted.

22.32 The attrition rate is the percentage of previous wave respondents who did not respond in the current wave. Attrition between waves caused a permanent drop in the sample size as the survey did not replace non-respondents. Although the weighting procedure for each wave partly corrected for attrition in the sample, there are some small differences in estimates between publications for each wave. Analysis of the attrition shows that higher than average sample loss occurred for males, young people, and people who were renting accommodation. Table 22.1 shows the size and composition of the panel at waves 1, 2 and 3, and the overall attrition rate.

### 22.1 Composition and Size of the Panel (Persons)

Subgroup	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Attrition rate (Wave 1 - Wave 3) (%).
Jobseekers(a)	5,488	4,779	4,261	22.3
Labour Market Program participants	1,019	888	775	23.9
Population reference group	2,311	2,120	1,983	14.2

(a) Includes some Jobseekers who were also part of the Population reference group.

## ESTIMATION METHODS

22.33 Calibration estimation techniques were used. Estimation was undertaken separately for the three components of the panel. Longitudinal weights were derived at each wave, benchmarking back to the population size/composition at the time of panel establishment. The use of longitudinal weights had the effect of always producing population estimates that related to the initial point of recruitment.

22.34 Labour Force Survey estimates (employed, unemployed and not in the labour force), were used to supplement independent demographic benchmarks (State/Territory of usual residence, part of State of usual residence, age and sex).

22.35 Aside from these 'standard' weights, it was also necessary to provide separate DSS, DEETYA and combined DSS/DEETYA weights. Although these weights produced similar estimates to the standard weights, their use was limited to analysis that used data from

administrative sources. This is because these weights apply to a smaller sample; for example, the combined DEETYA and DSS weight should only be used in analysis that involves both DEETYA and DSS data.

## **RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES**

22.36 Estimates from the survey were subject to both sampling and non-sampling error (see Chapter 16 for more detail). The relative standard errors of survey estimates were published in each survey publication.

## **DATA COMPARABILITY OVER TIME**

22.37 This was a one-off survey.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

22.38 For further details contact the Assistant Director, Labour Market Section on Canberra (02) 6252 7437.

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